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AMATEUR RADIO OPERATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The fall 1952 edition of Radio Amateur Call Book Magazine lists 155 licensed amateur radio stations in the countries of Southeast Asia. This list is broken down as follows: Burma, 34; Malaya, 65; Philippines, 52; Thailand, 4; Indochina, Indonesia and British Borneo, 0. This list of stations is given in Appendix A.

QST, the leading periodical in the amateur radio field stated in its August 1953 issue that international amateur radio activity is currently banned by Thailand, Indonesia, Indochina and British Borneo. The apparent discrepancy regarding Thailand may be explained by the fact that all four amateur radio outlets in that country are operated by governmental organizations: the Royal Army Signal Station, the Signal Inspection Department, the Air Attache's Office of the US Embassy and the United Nations' ECAFE office. Until recently a fifth station, HS1PA, was operated by Frank Spier, the Bangkok manager for QSL magazine.

A comparison which may prove of some value may be drawn between the 1952 figures and figures for the pre-war period. The spring 1939 issue of Radio Amateur Call Book Magazine gave the following breakdown by countries: Burma, 11; Malaya, 15; Philippines, 58; Thailand, 3; Indochina, 4; Indonesia, 184; British Borneo (including Sarawak), 2, for a total of 277 licensed amateur radio stations. Of major significance in comparing these two sets of figures are the facts that 1939 figures for the Philippines included many Americans while, because of Philippine licensing laws, there are none in the recent list. The four stations in Indochina were all operated by French nationals, and all stations in what is now Indonesia were operated by Dutch citizens.

Licensing and operating regulations vary in each country. Some of the limitations are a citizenship requirement (Philippines), non-commercial broadcasting (Thailand), intra-national broadcasting limitation (Indonesia) and plain text only (Indonesia). The regulations are given in fuller detail in Appendix B.

The regulations of the Southeast Asia nations may be classified in four categories:

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(1) Regulations which allow relatively free international communication by amateur operators, as in Malaya and Burma;

(2) Regulations which allow free international communication with any country with which a treaty or agreement on this matter exists, as in the Philippines;

(3) Regulations which allow domestic communication by amateur operators, as in Indonesia; and

(4) Regulations which do not permit the operation of amateur radios, as in Indochina and British Borneo.

In addition to licensed operations, there is the wide field of illegal radio operation, particularly by agents of foreign governments or by local anti-government groups. In the latter category fall the wide-spread operations of the Viet Minh army and pseudo-governmental agencies. Also in this category fall the suspected radio operations of the various insurgent groups in Burma and Indonesia and Communist Party activities in Thailand. In the category of foreign governments would fall broadcasts of the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) that occasionally have been heard from Thailand and Burma.

On these illegal operations little specific information is available. All sources consulted evidence an awareness of the existence of such operations but none could give specific data. Particularly in Thailand many reports have appeared in both the press and in State despatches of seizures of illegal radio equipment. Other reports showing the organization of the Chinese Communist Party of Thailand include a communications or radio section. There is reason to believe that similar units exist within all dissident groups.

The listening habits, training and hours of operation of amateur radio operators in the area is so varied and information so scant that it is impossible to provide even a general standard.

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